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BACK AGAIN;

OR,

FIVE YEARS OF LIBERAL RULE.

1880—1885.

A FORECAST.

OFFERED TO THE ELECTORS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM,

AND

DEDICATED TO THE LIBERAL PARTY.

LONDON:

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1880.

THE LIBERAL MINISTRY.

THE PRINCIPAL MEMBERS OF THE MINISTRY WERE AS FOLLOWS :—

<i>First Lord of the Treasury</i>	. .	Rt. Hon. W. E. LEADASTRAY.
<i>Chancellor of the Exchequer</i>	. .	Rt. Hon. ROBERT OMNISCIENT.
<i>Lord President of the Council.</i>	. .	Lord FAINTHEART.
<i>Secretary of State for Colonies</i>	. .	Viscount CHEESEPARING.
<i>Secretary of State for India</i>	. .	Duke of MULL.
<i>First Lord of the Admiralty</i>	. .	Rt. Hon. H. CAPSIZE.
<i>Secretary of State for War</i>	. .	Mr. FACING-BOTH-WAYS.
<i>Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs</i>		Earl GRAVEAIRS.

With Assistant-Secretaries and Junior Lords those well-known lesser lights, Messrs. MEDDLE, MUDDLE, the Hon. Mr. FUNK and Mr. CREDULITY.

BACK AGAIN ;

OR,

FIVE YEARS OF LIBERAL RULE.

A CHAPTER OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORY.

IT is difficult even after the lapse of many generations to speak of the events which mark the years 1880 to 1885 without departing from the impartial attitude proper to a historian and the dispassionate calm of a critic. Never before this time in the history of nations had it been found that a country in the height of a power and greatness unsurpassed, so recklessly, with such carelessness of consequences, threw away its wealth, its position, its power, its pride—not as a gambler throws away his fortune by staking his all on a slender chance of winning—but as a prodigal sailor lavishes in gifts upon the companions of a single debauch the hard-earned wages of years.

When Parliament dissolved at Easter of the year 1880, the position of this country was unparalleled in the history of the world. England had established free-trade, free institutions, self-government, justice, obedience to law, enterprise, respect for property over a far wider territory than even that once covered by the Roman Empire. England's fleets acted as the police of the whole world, keeping down piracy and

slavery. Her colonies and her Indian Empire were free to all the world for trade, settlement, and agriculture. The English-speaking colonies alone contained a population of 14,000,000 of loyal, free, orderly and industrious people. India contained over 200,000,000 of subjects, kept in order, and restrained from cutting each other's throats by the firm rule of British officers. This country, composed of so many discordant elements, was gradually settling down into respect for English rule, content with English justice, desire of development. Railways, canals, and roads had been made in all directions; and the native princes, looking outside their seraglios, were beginning to desire something better than the gauds and barbaric splendours which had satisfied their fathers.

As for the moral influence and prestige of England, lowered for a time by the selfish and unpatriotic policy of those who meanly acknowledged no obligations and accepted no responsibilities beyond the narrow seas, these had been raised again by firmness and strength. The nation had joyfully accepted the Conservative policy; they saw with pride Russian aggression checked at the very moment when Constantinople seemed within her grasp; new responsibilities boldly undertaken; and the Russian intrigues in Afghanistan, perfectly well known and understood in all the Indian courts, resulting in the crushing defeat of the Afghan tribes and the break-up of their power; a great danger averted at the Cape; and they saw how the eyes of Europe were turning again towards England, the hereditary champion of order, law, and liberty, in the hope that she was once more about to take her place on the right side. All other nations were threatened with Nihilism, Socialism, Atheism, Communism, row-

dyism. The kings of the Continent spent most of their time in congratulating each other on the last narrow escape ; in England alone, the fanatic element was concealed, if it existed. Trade, which had been dull, was reviving ; the bad harvest of 1879 promised to be followed by a good one in 1880 ; the factories were working full time ; the docks were crowded with English craft ; the wharves were laden with merchandise ; the carrying trade of the world was almost entirely in English hands ; London was the centre of the world, the great exchange which ruled the money market. English art, English literature, English science governed and directed the thought and the taste of the age. It was to England that all the world looked to borrow money ; it was in England that the most precious things were exhibited, bought and sold ; it was to London that all the world flocked, as pilgrims used to flock to Rome, for pleasure, profit, and instruction.

One cloud there was in the horizon. A small and noisy band of Irish members, leagued together under the name of Home Rulers, had gained a shameful notoriety by systematically using parliamentary privileges for the obstruction of business. The objects they professed were the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin for the transaction of Irish affairs, a sort of simple vestry. The object they secretly entertained was the practical severance of Ireland from the Empire, and its establishment as an independent state. No vision of heated politician or wild enthusiast could have seemed, even so late as 1879, more impossible, more visionary. After a display of patience which called forth repeated expressions of admiration from all observers, especially the Americans and Germans, the Government brought forward a series of

resolutions, which became Standing Orders, designed to prevent the continuance of tactics which, if persisted in, would have made Parliamentary government a mockery. The Home Rulers, therefore, were compelled to try other methods.

They found a weapon ready to their hand in a quarter and in a manner which surprised them greatly. For, unscrupulous traders in exaggerations, fictions, misstatements, as they were, they had one virtue: they were patriotic, and they expected the same patriotism in England. Indeed they never had the least ray of hope that they would succeed in either their ostensible or their real object: they looked to nothing more than to keep open the sore of Ireland's wrongs: they expected nothing better than to stand before the world clad in the cheap tinsel and gold paper of an Irish patriot; when they could no longer obstruct, their power seemed gone. Even in Ireland itself the mass of the people were apathetic, while the thinking classes loathed the very thought of an Irish Parliament, and the only real adherents to Home Rule were some of the tenant-farmers, who thought that an Irish Parliament would abolish rent; some of the priests, who thought that an Irish Parliament would give them Trinity College; and the agitators themselves, who thought that if they made noise enough there might be a chance of office.

The first sign of weakness was given by Lord Ramsay before the Dissolution of Parliament: he stood for Liverpool, a borough where the Irish element was strong: he found that without the solid Irish vote, so firm was the trust which the country reposed in the Government, he would have no chance: he found—at least, two or three agitators told him so—that

unless he gave a distinct pledge in favour of Home Rule, he would have no chance of getting their vote. It was an audacious thing to ask; it was a shameful pledge to give. Lord Ramsay temporized: he would consider the question of Home Rule as one to be seriously discussed: with this promise he went to the hustings—and *was defeated*. But the ice was broken: Lord Hartington in a fainthearted way, which proved that some at least among his followers would like to see their way to power even over the disruption of the Empire, deprecated the attachment of any serious meaning to such a pledge: but the hopes and the demands of Home Rulers rose. Only with their alliance, they saw, and only by their aid, the Liberals could command a majority.

The position of the Liberals, at this moment, was, even in the eyes of the most thorough-going Liberal partisan, unsatisfactory in the highest degree. They had no programme, no union; they represented no national aims. Their last tenure of power had left to the nation an army from which the old veterans had been driven and their place taken by boys; a navy which in fighting power was hardly equal to that of the Italians and below that of the French; empty stores, colonies dissatisfied, decried, and neglected; and hardly suppressed national indignation at the insults which the Liberals had tamely and even cheerfully endured. The Russians in 1871 tore up a treaty and flung it in our faces; we only said that we were thankful for their long forbearance in keeping it so long; we submitted to arbitration with America, in which retrospective articles of International Law were introduced in the teeth of law and justice; more than that, the Government knew, the nation knew, that a most

monstrous and unprovoked act of aggression was actually resolved upon, yet no step had been taken to meet it; no ally secured, no preparations made to stand up for justice and national responsibilities. Then men asked themselves, what had been the good of this economy of which the Liberals were so proud?—a few thousands were saved, but the army was well-nigh ruined; a few more thousands saved, but the fleet rotting and the naval arsenals empty. In the civil service, hundreds of intelligent officers had been forced to retire and their places taken by copying clerks; in the dockyards hundreds of skilled artizans were driven to emigrate; yet no salaries were reduced. The number of sinecure offices was as great. The same ludicrous disproportion existed of admirals, and generals, officers to men. What, they asked, was the gain to the nation when a hundred men at thirty shillings a week were sent to starve, and an office was created for a Minister's own nephew worth fifteen hundred pounds a year? After six years the nation had made the discovery that while no one at all, except heads of departments, whose salaries were for the most part raised, had benefited by the economical changes, the only persons who had suffered were the working classes.

In 1880 the Liberals had not yet recovered the disgraces of 1873; they were still disorganized, and still, apparently, helpless. Among them were the descendants of the old Whig families, men who were Liberal by birth, even if Conservative by convictions: the Peace-at-any-price party, who put their cotton and iron interests above any considerations of Imperial policy; the greater part of the Dissenters, whose strength, greatly exaggerated at all times, lay chiefly

in the ability of certain leaders; a few Roman Catholics, and the members of the "extreme left," comprising all the enthusiasts, fanatics, hobby-riders, and professional agitators: but they had no policy, and their leaders, as yet, despaired of doing more than gradually to discredit the Government by exposure of the small mistakes which happen to every Cabinet, and by asking constant and embarrassing questions.

This, then, was the state of parties in the early spring of 1880.

On the Dissolution, Lord Hartington, nominal leader of the Liberals, issued a manifesto, in which he spoke of Home Rule as impracticable, and declared his conviction that any concession in this direction would be mischievous. This manifesto undoubtedly produced its effect in strengthening the waverers among the Liberals, who had been offended by Lord Ramsay's untoward weakness. What, then, was their surprise when, a few days later, it was whispered abroad that certain Liberal members were not only coquetting with Home Rulers, but that they were actually pledging themselves to a commission of inquiry into the justice of the demand. The first national indignation was soothed by a few judicious post-cards, contributed by the real leader of the party. He pointed out that what the Home Rulers wanted was not the granting of their demands. That, he said, he should have resisted at once; but they asked for a simple inquiry into how far their demands were legitimate. He allayed the fears of the country; he called upon his friends to reflect that, before all, the Conservatives, under whom we had suffered, to say nothing of useless foreign wars, from a year of continual rain, bad harvests, dull trade,

and Russian aggression must be turned out. He declared himself (in the interests of the party) willing to yield so far to the Home Rulers. He called upon all good Liberals to do the same. The just irritation softened down ; the efforts of the patriotic press, which showed the move in its true light of treasonous and unpatriotic partizanship, were denounced as electioneering tricks ; Liberal candidates were led to believe that a simple concession meant nothing ; the Radicals took up the matter and made a party cry of it, and at Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Dundee, wherever the Irish vote was strong, the papers were full of meetings, letters, and orations calling on the English people, in common justice, to hear their Irish brethren ; so that, what was originally a coarse trick and a common dodge, of a few obscure Irish members, anxious to be rebels, so long as they could be that without fear of the law—this thing, that was in itself an act of high treason, was actually made into a cry for justice and an appeal to the nobler instincts of this great nation. Alas ! England, as in 1876, was led by her emotions ; common sense could get no hearing ; the Dissenting pulpits rang with menaces and adjurations ; every stump had its orator ; every cobbler talked of redressing Ireland's wrongs ; and in the attempt to redress wrongs which never existed, was wreaked the ruin of England's greatness.

The Home Rulers, thanks to the impetus given to their movement, came across the Channel a hundred strong : nearly every county and every borough returned members pledged to Home Rule. And it was sadly marked by those who still retained their presence of mind, that the pledge exacted of candidates in Ireland was not for a Commission but for Home Rule itself.

The Liberals, with this accession, had a clear majority of fifty-two : Lord Beaconsfield resigned : the Opposition came in with their old leader for Premier : it was clear from the beginning that if they wished to carry any measure at all they would have to depend upon their new and inconvenient allies. It soon became apparent, too, that no measure would be passed until their claims were first satisfied. They demanded a Royal Commission : they demanded that the Commission should be chosen from their own body, that is, should consist entirely of members pledged to carry Home Rule : they also demanded that it should be held in Dublin. A patriotic Ministry would, even then, have risked everything for the sake of maintaining the integrity of the country ; but the minority were composed of men who put Imperial interests after party : in fact they hated the word Imperial : it was hardly to be expected that those who had for years practised systematic neglect of the colonies, and advised them to cut themselves adrift of the mother country, should now greatly care whether Ireland was granted a separate government or not. Their demands seemed to interfere in no way with trade, and as the Premier himself said, it was before all things desirable that the Irish people should be conciliated. The demands were granted and the Commission began its sittings. Thereupon the business before the House went on briskly. The Premier introduced and carried a Bill for enabling Church Monasteries and Conventual Institutions to hold land : he also obtained a charter for the establishment of Jesuit colleges in Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Durham. A very large reduction in the numbers of the rank and file of army and navy was also voted, and an increase in the number of general officers,

admirals, and honorary colonels. The First Lord of the Admiralty announced his intention to build no new ships until other countries had decided on the best form of vessel for fighting purposes. That decided, he promised that England's naval supremacy should be at once guaranteed. The Secretary of State for War announced, amid the cheering of the Irish members, who spoke in the most eulogistic terms of this far-seeing measure, that he would receive no more recruits for the army over the age of sixteen. Boys at that age, he explained, are easy to teach, can be drilled on the half-time system, cost little in pay, and are amenable to discipline. The Premier promised, in addition, that church doctrines of a distinctive kind would be taught these boys, and that none but those who were members of the English Church Union or Roman Catholics should be appointed to any office of discipline in the barracks, an announcement received in silence on the Ministerial side, and with groans from the Opposition. The Irish members spoke of these measures in the highest praise. It was at this period that Lord Hartington resigned, and, followed by about a dozen of the old Liberals, crossed over to the Conservative side of the House. The Premier congratulated his party on the defection, which, he said, would only strengthen their hand.

The Estimates for 1882, the year after these reforms were decided upon, showed an increase in the Army Estimates of £258,451, the gain by the reductions in the rank and file having been more than swallowed up by the increased number of general officers. The Navy Estimates, however, showed a reduction of no less than $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions; no new ships having been commissioned, and Portsmouth Dockyard having been

finally closed. An attempt was made to sell the ground on which it had formerly stood, but as the town was completely ruined by the loss of the shipping and dockyard, this fell through. The Premier therefore announced, amid the shouts of the Irish members, that he had resolved on endowing with this ground the newly-established Abbey of English Benedictines. He also announced his intention of bringing in a Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the English Church. The grants for the Volunteers, Militia, and Army Reserve were this year abolished for the sake of economy. The Irish members voted unanimously for the abolition of these forces, which they contended were useless, costly, and a heavy burden on the country. Questions being asked during the session whether the Government would do anything to suppress the piracy which had sprung up in the Eastern and Chinese seas since the withdrawal of the English fleet, the First Lord replied that as they proposed to retire from all the English settlements at Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Hongkong, Shanghai, and North Australia, which, as could be easily proved by the returns of these colonies, were a loss and burden to the country instead of a gain, it was felt that as other countries would henceforth be more immediately concerned than England with the trade in those seas, they might suppress the pirates for themselves. As regards the revival of the slave-trade in the West and East Coasts of Africa, the Government had signified their opinion on the matter to the Sultan of Zanzibar and the King of Dahomey. It was unfortunately true that the English Consul of Zanzibar had been kicked out of the palace by the Sultan himself, and that the English Consul at Dahomey had been slaughtered in

consequence of his interposition at one of the native customs. A final arrangement was this year arrived at with Russia on the subject of India. "Nothing," said the Secretary of State for India—the Duke of Mull—"is more to be desired than such an understanding." It had been arranged that the Russians should occupy and hold Afghanistan, with Candahar, Herat, Merv, and the Khyber Pass ; but that they should promise—the Czar, in fact, had given his sovereign word—not to go south. The English, for their part, were to retire west of the Indus, which was to be for the future their scientific frontier. The Russians had also undertaken not to intrigue with the native states. The Opposition grumbled ; the *Pall Mall Gazette* loudly declared that this arrangement was suicidal, fatal, cowardly ; the *Spectator* defended it on the ground of the known friendliness of the Russian Government, and the frank honest nature of the Russian character. In this year deputations were received from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, asking what steps Her Majesty's Government were going to take for their protection in case of war. They were informed by the Colonial Secretary, in his least affable manner, that the mother-country was tired of the continual expense and danger connected with the colonies, and that he advised them to take such steps as seemed good to them for their own defence in case of any danger from abroad, which he saw no reason to fear. Mutual jealousy, he explained, would prevent Germany, France, Italy, and Russia from seizing them in their present unprotected position ; while he thought they could defend themselves easily against Holland, Denmark, or Portugal. At all events, they need not expect, so long as the Liberals were in power,

a single ship or a single man sent to them for their own defence. The deputation withdrew in silence, but proceeded to hold a series of meetings with closed doors. They then returned to their respective homes without taking any official leave at the Colonial Office.

In the year 1883 the first storm broke over the unfortunate country. The Home Rule Commission, which had been sitting at Dublin for two years and a half—the Commissioners received 2000*l.* a year each, and were, therefore, not anxious to bring out their report—terminated its labours, and reported in a document, including appendices, of 1983 pages, that Home Rule was necessary; that the country would be satisfied with nothing short of absolute power of governing itself in its own way. Immediately on the publication of this report the whole of the Irish members in the House of Commons left London and crossed over to Dublin. Here they constituted themselves an Irish Parliament, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Report of the Commissioners.

On the intelligence of this *coup d'état* the feeling in England was nothing short of consternation. A Cabinet Council was held, at which, it afterwards transpired, there were grave dissensions. In the evening, before a crowded House, the Premier made a statement. He said that, in sight of those benches, now empty, which were ordinarily occupied by Irish members, it was useless to disguise the fact that a very grave step had been taken by his honourable friends from Ireland; that they had mistaken the recommendation of a Commission for the act of the Legislature; but, relying as he did on the good feeling, the friendliness, the good taste, the honour of his

friends, he had no doubt whatever that the mistake had only to be pointed out to them. He concluded by exhorting the House (and indeed the Conservatives at the moment, owing to the Irish defection, were in an absolute majority) not to harass the Government at a crisis so important, but to leave the conduct of affairs entirely in their hands. He reminded the Opposition of his own conduct in the year 1876, when, at a time when the Government were most anxious to carry out an honourable and patriotic foreign policy, in accordance with treaties and obligations, he had himself, indignant though he had been with the murder of twenty or thirty Bulgarians, confined himself to calling attention to the fact in a simple, plain, and unvarnished narrative. Sir Stafford Northcote rose to assure the Government that nothing was further from the thoughts of the Opposition than to take advantage of their majority to upset the Government: the Ministers, he intimated, had got the country into so great a mess that the Conservatives would rather not have any finger in the pie.

It appeared from next day's telegrams that the new Irish Parliament did not recognize the authority of the Viceroy: later telegrams told that the whole of the south and west were in arms, and that the rebels were marching in order and like regular troops upon the Capital. The Viceroy finding that he was guarded by no more than a single regiment of infantry (consisting of sixty officers and one hundred and twenty-two newly enlisted rank and file), with a company of Hussars, ordered the embarkation of the troops to prevent bloodshed, and remained at the Castle unprotected. He issued a manifesto calling on loyal

Irishmen to the defence of their country : the men who tried to post it were ill-treated by the people, the loyal Irish were intimidated and remained at home : the streets were in the possession of a furious and howling mob, who loudly clamoured for death to all English and to h—l with the landlords. Shop-shutters were put up ; decent people stayed in their houses, the advance guards of the 'Army of Ireland' poured into the streets of the City, and such an orgie of licence and drunkenness began as had never before been heard of. The friends of the Viceroy, meanwhile, dragged him away from the Castle, and hid him in some private house until they found means of sending him across the Channel, disguised as a gentleman's servant. Yet a week before his Lordship had been the most popular Viceroy ever known in the country.

The day after the seizure of the City by the newly raised army of rebels, a messenger arrived from the Premier. He was treated with the greatest contumely, compelled to wait in the street while the Parliament deliberated how he should be received, and at last being brought before the House, assured that Ireland had begun to govern herself, meant to govern herself, declined to receive advice or expostulation, acknowledged neither Queen nor Viceroy, and would shortly proclaim the form of Government which the country had chosen. In other words, Ireland had resolved on independence.

This, then, was the end of listening to Home Rulers. Rebellion, long contemplated, had begun. The Opposition congratulated the Government on the success of their domestic policy, and sarcastically concluded that the strength of their Army and Navy was such that they could hope for a successful issue.

Success, however, was hopeless from the beginning. The army, composed of mere skeleton battalions, and those newly enlisted boys of sixteen or so, were mostly in India. No doubt the Irish members, the leaders and organizers of the conspiracy, were fully aware of the defenceless state of England, before they ventured on their *coup*: recruiting officers were sent out in all directions, and in a few days about 40,000 more boys were recruited, many of them Irish. In spite of the withdrawal—in 1881—of the grant for the army reserve, the reserves were called up, and 5000 answered to the call. With 40,000 boys and 5000 veterans, England proceeded to the reconquest of a country of 5,000,000, of whom 200,000 were already in arms, drilled and organized, and under properly trained officers.

Then began recriminations in the press: the *Pall Mall* pointed out how for years it had warned the Government of the secret arming, the organization, and the midnight drills, that were going on in Ireland, advised that a *levée en masse* should be made of the English nation; it showed that although the Volunteers had been disbanded, there were at least 300,000 men under fifty who had become efficient under the old system; it demanded that prompt, vigorous, and instant measures should be taken. The Government, however, smitten with a palsy of irresolution, were afraid, they said, that the *levée en masse* would cost too much, and would probably lead to their being turned out of office. They therefore, resolved on sending an expedition of 15,000 men, including their precious band of veterans, to land at Loch Foyle, as far as possible away from the head-quarters of the revolt, by way of demonstration. "When the rebels," said the

Premier, "the misguided rebels see the strong arm of England stretched out to punish, they will no doubt instantly lay down their arms."

The rebels, however, were very far from being ready to lay down their arms. They had as yet met with no opposition ; they had marched through a Catholic country, the Protestants, being few, flying before them ; they were blessed on their way by the priests ; they were cheered by the women ; their ranks were swollen by thousands of the peasants, eager to have their share in achieving the independence which would, they ignorantly believed, relieve them for ever of taxes, remove the potato disease, and give them back their land. Miracles were reported from half-a-dozen little towns where, as the priest, the priest's housekeeper, the priest's housekeeper's friends all unanimously reported, in one place the Virgin had promised success, in another Joseph had appeared declaring that he was with them ; in a third, St. Patrick had stood on the steps of the altar, and with tears in his saintly eyes had assured the rebels of the justice of their cause. In the north, the Protestants gathered together trembling. What did it mean, the cowardice and supineness of England ? To what condition had that great country fallen when in reply to an armed rebellion it could only promise to make a "demonstration" in the Protestant north ?

Every day added to the peril. Not only the Catholic peasantry but the whole of Catholic Ireland was in arms after a week. Nothing but drilling went on day after day. Every gunmaker was overwhelmed with orders. There was a rush to the north of all the Protestant clergy and gentry. Trinity was closed and the students dismissed. The capital was like a city in a state of siege.

Even then, had the Government listened to the advice of the Opposition, Ireland might have been saved. The enthusiasm of the people was but froth ; the leaders knew very well that they had no real grievances. The Catholic bishops knew that they would be worse off under an independent Ireland than under the rule of the United Empire. The Home Rulers themselves, the men who had actually done the mischief, were afraid, now that the ball was actually rolling and would have stopped it if they could. The north were ready to fight for freedom of worship, if not for England. The rebels had no artillery to speak of, but the Government was afraid. As it was in the year 1871, when Russia deliberately insulted the country, the Liberal Government were afraid. The expenditure of money seemed to them a more terrible thing than national disgrace. They were afraid, they would make their demonstration, and they would protest.

Ships were hired for the conveyance of the troops ; none of the ironclads were fit to go to sea for their protection. The men were sent down to Liverpool, where they embarked amid the jibes and sneers of the Irish dock labourers, who openly prophesied murder for every mother's son of them, and threw stones at the boats as they pushed off. The officers had received orders from head-quarters not to exasperate the Irish labourers, therefore the men were not allowed to disperse the roughs. The voyage across the Channel was happily effected without loss, and the men were landed at Moville, where they encamped and sat down to wait for further orders.

Deputations were received by the Premier urging more prompt measures. Volunteers—old officers and

men—sent up petitions begging to be allowed to enrol themselves into regiments. They were refused. The Government, he said, were fully aware of the gravity of the situation. But they had resources. They had plans of which it would at present be inexpedient to speak. What their plans were appeared later on, when they were disclosed in the Irish Parliament by one of the original Obstructionists of 1877. They were, in fact, attempts to bribe the leaders to return to the English rule!

Seeing no hope of further aid from England, the Protestants of the north resolved, at this juncture, to throw in their lot with the Catholics of the south and west; their members were already sitting in the Dublin Parliament, and therefore they had nothing to do but to let it be known that no opposition was to be expected from them; and, in addition, they offered to raise and equip twenty regiments of a thousand men each for the defence of the country.

The Irish in Lancashire, Glasgow, Dundee, and all the large towns, whether instigated by their friends in Dublin, or by a contagious love of disorder, rose in a wild and purposeless disorder at one and the same time. In Glasgow they held possession of the streets for a whole day, burning, pillaging, drinking, and committing every kind of outrage. There were no troops, but the citizens formed themselves into companies, composed mostly of old volunteers, and next morning, while the streets were still crowded with a howling, roaring mob, mad with drink, excited by plunder, cleared them at the point of the bayonet, without the preliminary Riot Act, firing volley after volley into the miserable mass of unresisting and panic-stricken mob. There was in fact a massacre. The

people were maddened at the destruction of the night, which cost more to Glasgow, it was estimated, than the suppression of the Irish rebellion itself would have done, had it been taken resolutely, and in time. Similar scenes were witnessed in Liverpool, Manchester, Dundee, Edinburgh, and wherever the Irish were in any number. In London they were kept down by a remarkable union of the police and the London workmen, but with the loss of several lives. A question was to have been asked by a leading Quaker on the subject ; but the angry attitude of the Opposition caused its withdrawal. So, because the Liberal party had not the patriotism to refuse any dealings with Home Rule, these poor wretches of Irish were slaughtered in the streets, and the merchants of Glasgow saw their warehouses sacked and burned.

Worse was to follow. The rising in Ireland created the most intense excitement among the Irish population in America. There were eight millions of Irish in the States : there were five millions belonging to the working class, lawless, like their brothers across seas, excitable, easily led, easily daunted, credulous, the tools of the priests, ready to believe whatever they were told. They, too, would have a share in the emancipation of their country. First, they held meetings ; then they subscribed ; next they armed and drilled ; then they organized a service of privateers on the seas and a grand attack by land on Canada. In every great American town the Irish were out in their thousands, drilling, marching, arming, and quarrelling. Hated as they were in the States, they found no sympathy in America with their hopes ; besides, the condition of England, low as it was, compared with what it had been, excited the pity as well as the contempt of the

States : the Yankees had the will but not the power to make their Irish remain quiet. For their executive was weak : their little army contained no more than 10,000 men ; of these half were out on frontier duty ; the rest were half Irish and half Germans : what use were they against the great volunteer army of something like half a million of men, ready to take the field against Canada, which, at the outside, could not raise more than a hundred and fifty thousand, and had an Irish element in Montreal as well ?

The Canadians were aghast. They saw no chance of help from England. They were assured at Washington that the Government had no sympathy with the Irish, whom the Americans cordially detested. But they were face to face with the danger of an invasion by a mob of undisciplined troops. There was no time to lose. They hastily called together a council from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward's Island, Cape Breton, British Columbia, Red River, Upper and Lower Canada, and agreed upon separating from the mother-country, since this connection involved them in nothing more than national humiliation and invasion. They proposed to be received into the Federation of the States, with the proviso that they should not be saddled with any portion of the States' national debt. The proposal was accepted. England lost at one blow a vast territory, a loyal and loving people, a country whose mercantile marine ranked fifth in the scale of nations. America gained by becoming one vast State, and the wings were clipped of these Irish rowdies who were preparing to plunge Canada into blood and slaughter. Canada was lost to England.

The next step of the American Irish, disappointed

of their schemes of plunder and murder, was to raise regiments for the help of their countrymen. No regiments, really, were wanted at all, because the English Government, having ruined both Army and Navy, were too contemptibly weak ; but it pleased them to set on foot three or four regiments, and to despatch them to Ireland. Then the Government proclaimed a blockade of the Irish coast. That was, of all their steps, the most futile. For they not only had no ships to maintain the blockade, but at the very word blockade there issued from every harbour in the States, on the French coast, and in the Pacific stations of the Russian navy, privateers bearing the Irish flag, manned with sailors of every nation under the sun. In a short three months the whole carrying trade of England was gone ; in 1879 she had practically the carrying trade of the world. The magnificent fleets of steamers, the Allan, Cunard, Peninsular and Oriental, British Steam Navigation Company, and the rest were either driven off the seas altogether, captured and sunk, or they were sold to French, Germans, and American companies for about a tenth of their value. The docks of Liverpool, London, and Glasgow, once the glory of the country, were empty. Outside the Mersey, off the Nore, at the mouth of the Clyde, cruised the venomous privateers, flying the green flag which had ruined, perhaps for ever, the most magnificent ocean trade which one nation had ever got together.

So, sadly and in deep humiliation, the year 1883 came to an end.

Early in 1884 news arrived that the colonists of Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania and the Cape had agreed upon separation from the mother-country, and forming a grand confederation with the United States

of America for purposes of offence and defence. The Treaty of Melbourne had been so secretly considered and resolved upon that not even the colonial governors knew what was in progress, and the news of its confirmation reached England on the same day that the governors of the revolted colonies telegraphed their expulsion from their ports. There was thus established a great and mighty Republic of English-speaking people, consisting of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (together with the West Indian Islands, which quickly gave in their adhesion), in which England, the mother-country of all, had no place. The capital of this Federation was Washington. The fleet of the States became the fleet of the Federation; their flag became its flag; and the poor old Union Jack disappeared. Naturally, the first step was the proclamation of a Protection Tariff, keeping everything out of the ports of the Federation except their own manufactures. England therefore saw herself locked out of every port in the world; as for her carrying trade, that was already destroyed. Now she could not even export her cotton stuffs; the manufacturers closed their works; the workmen prepared to emigrate; those who had money trembled for the safety even of the Three per Cents. Birmingham and Glasgow, the very stronghold of the Liberals, were fain to ask themselves whether these calamities would have happened if the Conservatives had remained in office.

In Ireland the Rebellion continued to grow in strength; the cause was blessed by the Pope; a Catholic Republic had been proclaimed, whose head, as was proposed—but this was never carried into effect—should be a Cardinal nominated at Rome.

Toleration for Protestants was also proclaimed ; but Protestants were not to be allowed to own land, a forced sale of Protestant holdings was ordered, and their land was bought up at inconceivably low prices by attorneys, land agents, stewards, and the adventurers who had made the Rebellion. Rents, instead of being abolished altogether, as the peasantry had expected, were instantly doubled and trebled in value ; and the first seeds of the dissension, which quickly destroyed the young Republic, were sown. Meantime, thousands of Irish adventurers from America were landing every day ; the trade of privateering was destroyed now that England's mercantile marine existed no longer ; it was no longer possible to filibuster in Canada ; they came, bringing with them the worst villainies learned in the slums of New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, to prey upon their own countrymen ; they got themselves returned to Parliament, and practised upon the dismayed Home Rulers the same tactics of obstruction, exaggeration, and unscrupulous statements as had been successful in London. In a few short months the New Yorkers turned out every man of the original Parliament and began to administer the affairs of Ireland after the manner in which their friends had administered the municipality of New York. In May 1884, the army of demonstration which had remained idle at Moville was finally withdrawn, and Ireland's independence was no longer resisted.

The Premier exhibited, at this juncture, a cheerfulness and buoyancy under misfortune which astonished his enemies, and excited the warmest enthusiasm among his friends.

“The events,” he said, “of this year have been, I confess, of the gravest nature. They have, in fact,

entirely changed the political situation of England. We have lost our colonies ; Protection has closed our factories ; Ireland has become independent ; our mercantile marine has been driven from the seas. All these things denote for us a new departure. We are no longer what we have been. The England of the past, restless, hungering for annexation, busy in accumulating wealth, has gone. It remains to consider what we shall be. Sir, we are the inhabitants of a happy island, secure within its silver belt, envied by none, hostile to none, anxious only to live its own life for itself, to develop the higher culture, to study Homer and the early Fathers ; to be for all the world a home of learning, art, and literature. We are poorer than we were ; the moralist may sigh over the ruins of great brick factories, the ugliness of which has long offended the eyes of the artist ; yet the green fields remain to us, and the blue skies, untainted by smoke, and the forests, hills, and meadows. We seek no longer—indeed, it is now impossible—to get rich ; to live frugally, to nourish high thoughts, must be henceforth our aim. Happily there is this ground for encouragement ; the power of Dissent has been finally broken by the ruin of trade. In every village church is daily service ; in most churches the confessional is crowded day by day ; the authority of the Church grows more and more ; the family, represented by the wives and mothers, is entirely in the hands of priests ; and the English Church Union can command the elections of more than half the country.”

But the Premier alone was cheerful. The Duke of Mull, who hitherto had rivalled the great Commoner in showing a smiling front, now sat in his room, gloomily reading despatch after despatch which came from India.

The news, whatever it was, seemed to have aged him suddenly. He walked with rounded shoulders and hanging head, his brow was furrowed, his eye restless. When questions on India were asked in the dull and apathetic House of Lords his Grace replied evasively. But the day came when he could evade no longer. The truth had to be told, though it was told by other lips than his.

Ever since the Convention of Herat, the Russians had been intriguing in the native courts of India. Their emissaries swarmed ; not only the princes, but the merchants, the villagers, the very Pariahs were infused by Russian agents with hatred and contempt of the British name. But it was not until the autumn of 1884 that common action became possible. Then came the second great mutiny. Then the Mohammedan troops, stimulated by their holy men, poured out in hundreds of thousands from the city of every petty prince, from Nepaul, Oude, Cashmere, Hyderabad, Assam, and every state whose loyalty had been our boast and admiration. They were joined by hill-men, tribes of strange and uncouth languages, armed with hook and bill, eager for slaughter. They were led by Russian officers, openly and contemptuously ordered off for this special service by instructions from St. Petersburg. The English, mostly warned in time, fled hastily to the great towns on the sea-board, whither Germany, watchful of events, and France jealous of her rival, sent vessels of war to protect or save the European fugitives. Many thousands were murdered with their wives and children on the plains at their stations. In a brief fortnight Calcutta and Bombay alone remained English. The Russian forces poured into India from Afghanistan, and Russia

loudly declared that India was hers by right of conquest.

India remained Russian for exactly six months. Then another and a worse mutiny occurred. The Indian princes, accustomed to the reign of law and justice established by the English, could not brook the insolence and tyranny of the Russians. They rose again ; and in less time than it had taken them to oust the English, aided by the Russians, they turned out the latter unaided.

Then a strange thing happened. An alliance was concluded between Germany, France, Austria, and Italy. By this alliance, the two former states divided between them Holland, Belgium, and Denmark ; Scandinavia was made to enter the German Confederation ; Austria got Roumania, Bulgaria, Servia, and Constantinople ; Italy took Trieste and the east coast of the Adriatic, with Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, and Syria. Asia Minor, from which the Liberal Government had long since withdrawn the English Consuls, remained with the Turks—for a while—and Russia was curtly informed that Germany and France had agreed to divide between them Persia, India, Cochin China, and the Eastern seas. In compensation, the Russians were informed that they might, if they pleased, extend their frontier eastward in Asia, where the Chinese had concentrated half their army, now armed with weapons of precision ; or they might, said Bismarck, if they preferred, make war upon the American and Colonial Federations.

Once more, therefore, Russia found herself the cat's paw ; once more, after spending treasure and blood, she had to withdraw, leaving all the solid advantages in the hands of her rivals. Like England, she was

isolated ; like England, she was poor ; like England, she was discontented ; unlike England in one thing alone, that she still had an army and could make herself felt.

As for the Duke of Mull, he resigned, and India being free there was no longer any use in having a Secretary for Indian affairs. His Grace retired to his seat in Scotland, where he spent the rest of his days in laying the blame upon the Conservatives.

The national humiliation was very great. The distress in Lancashire, Birmingham, Sheffield, and Glasgow was almost intolerable : notwithstanding that every day saw hundreds of emigrants sail for some port or other of the Federation, where they were offered free land for cultivation—these poor factory hands who had never seen a plough!—there remained thousands in absolute hopeless destitution. Then hunger was appeased by means of soup kitchens and gratuitous distribution of bread ; works were opened by the Government ; gangs of men were employed at a shilling a day in pulling down the useless docks of Liverpool, Glasgow, and London ; other gangs were set to clear and break up commons ; emigration was almost forced upon them ; the shopkeepers were hopelessly ruined ; house-owners could no longer collect their rents, and were ruined as well as their tenants ; acres of streets where great houses had once commanded rentals of two, three, and seven hundred a year, stood empty. The agricultural interest alone flourished.

It was in 1885, when the Liberals had been in power five years, that their fall arrived.

It was caused by the breaking out of the Civil War in Ireland. It was the old story—corruption, malver-

sation, party and place at Dublin ; in the country discontent at high rents lawlessness and landlord-shooting ; and in the north, persecution of the Protestants. When these rose at last, they were joined by thousands of honest Catholics, unable to endure any longer the evils of their administration.

The Premier spoke of this civil war in a spirit of great thankfulness that the responsibility and expense of suppressing it did not belong to England. He said that we must deplore the events which were occurring, the massacre of Armagh, the destruction of Londonderry, and the murders of so many innocent women and children ; but still we must remember that we had been deprived of the right of interference, and that Ireland no longer belonged to us. He would have said more in the same strain of self-satisfaction, but he was interrupted by the Hon. Member for —, who, springing to his feet from the Opposition benches, thundered forth an invective, poured from his very heart. At the first words, in which he compared the Irish atrocities with the Bulgarian, and quoted the Premier's own words then, compared with what he had just said, the House, which had seemed to have lost all its old spirit, shook itself together and became awake. As the speaker proceeded to show how, step by step, England had been dragged in the dust, and degraded and ruined, the House, from both sides, cheered. As he went on, members grasped each other by the hand, and tears came into rugged eyes. The misery of the present compared with the grandeur of the past was brought home to them : before them all sat the men who had wrought this woe : they dared to sit there, smiling, while the nation wept and mourned, and covered its face for shame.

The last event of the year 1885, was the departure of the Prince of Wales with the Princess and the Royal children. The Prince, in a farewell address to the English people, declared that he could no longer bear to live among the memories of England's former greatness. As for himself, he was going to some one of the old colonies, separated from the mother-country, where still his House was honoured, he would find a spot where he could live as a private gentleman until better times should dawn. Amid the tears of the nation the Prince and Princess sailed away.





